



Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



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Director

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TO: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
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FROM: Richard J. Bruckner
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SUBJECT: LAND ENTITLEMENT PROCESS REVIEW – STATUS UPDATE

Background

On May 25, 2010, the Board of Supervisors directed Regional Planning to prepare a comprehensive review of case processing, including:

- Identifying specific time-frames for case processing, with performance metrics for processing land-use approvals
- Determining measures to streamline the process for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act, particularly measures that will expedite Environmental Impact Reports
- Document how the Department complies with the Permit Streamlining Act
- Discussion of possible means of expanding the Special Projects section to process more of the larger projects
- Providing a better means of accounting for those projects which are based on a "deposit" system
- Reaching out to building industry representatives, consultants who regularly process applications and members of the public to solicit feedback concerning both the proposed processing improvements and the fee increases

The Board asked the Department to report back within a six-month timeframe. This is the third status update; one additional update will be provided prior to a projected final report to be submitted no later than early December.

Stakeholder Committee—Third Meeting

The Stakeholder Committee consists of representatives from the building industry, BIA, consultants, Urban Land Institute, LAEDC and the environmental community. The third meeting of the Committee was held on September 9, 2010. The primary focus of this meeting was to begin a discussion of proposed organizational, process and technology

improvements with the Stakeholders. The improvements can be categorized into the following areas:

- 1) Restructuring DRP Organization to support increased customer focus, facilitate geographic expertise and a one planner/one project approach to case processing
- 2) Explore co-location opportunities with the Department of Public Works and the Fire Department to provide a more convenient, single location to transact land development business
- 3) Create a "Conceptual Plan" review step to elicit more collaboration and better decision-making in the early stages of a project and to eliminate re-submittals of tentative maps
- 4) Define and publish guidelines for "substantial conformance" and enable standards for plan modifications to allow for more flexibility in the process
- 5) Establish improved tracking of review referrals to other departments/agencies and sign MOUs with all participating agencies to ensure reviews are completed within established and predictable timeframes
- 6) Enhance Subdivision Committee process to increase collaboration between departments, improve communications with applicants and explore the possibility of expanding this concept to other permits
- 7) Improve the plan submission process by creating a single plan submission location, creating more usable application forms, assigning the responsible planner upon case submission and phasing in electronic submittals
- 8) Review the CUP renewal process to explore simplifying reviews for non-controversial cases, consider lengthening CUP terms and reducing fees
- 9) Enhance the hearing process by facilitating earlier development of hearing materials and making more electronic hearing files readily available via the web
- 10) Improving the approval process by establishing guidelines for "conceptual plan" review and developing guidelines for revised submissions and substantial conformance determinations
- 11) Create an enhanced process for writing new and revising existing ordinances, provide documentation of rules and ensure that there are clear metrics relating to the impacts of new ordinances
- 12) Strengthening the Department's fiscal and fee accounting process by implementing more detailed project accounting, providing better integration with eCAPS, allowing credit/debit and bank draft payment options along with a number of other improvements

All of the above improvements were well-received by the Stakeholders. Discussion was positive and supportive by all participants, and there is universal commitment to moving these ideas forward.

Next Steps

The next phase of the project includes interviews of each of the five Planning Commissioners and another round of interviews with County technical staff. These interviews will be used to introduce and discuss proposed process models for each of the above major improvement areas. Further discussion will take place at the next Stakeholder Committee meeting, which is scheduled for September 30, 2010.

Fee Accounting Process

The Department has continued to make substantial progress in its review of the fee accounting process, with great assistance from the Auditor-Controller and CEO. A number of proposed time collection models have been developed and are now being analyzed for possible implementation. In addition, the Department has been working diligently to produce a report comparing revenue attributed to flat fee permits in relation to staff costs to process these permits. This analysis will be completed and included with the final report to your Board in early December.

We will provide another update on the status of this project in October. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if you require additional information.

RJB:DLS

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors